

**President's Letter**  
**Allen G. Squire**  
**November, 2009**

With the current information on the lag in improvement in milk prices and the fact that the Cold Storage Reports are not ever being audited, could it be that we truly have the rats guarding the cheese?

What Our Beef Herd Experiment Taught Us

In the past few years at Southwind Dairy, as bordering ranchland became available, we tried to acquire it mainly to protect our water supply from over development. In addition, we felt that our biosecurity was heightened by limiting the incursions of neighboring ranch cattle, potentially those of Mexican origin. Then a strange thing happened for New Mexico – it rained. This led to the growth of an abundance of vegetation that we knew would shortly be a tinder dry fire hazard surrounding our dairy. Since our Holsteins were too interested in following a feed truck and because Holsteins would starve where a New Mexico beef cow would prosper, we added a small herd of Brangus and Angus crossbreds to our rainbow herd of yellow, red, black & white, horned & polled limousine crossbreds. Little did we know we were embarking on a cow psychology adventure.

As cows would get very close to calving, they would disappear into the depths of the ranch, only to emerge a couple days later with no calf in sight. After frantically searching for several calves that I assumed had become coyote dinner, I finally realized that these cows would hide their calf and come up for water, then return to their calf to help prepare it to face the world. When they finally brought up the new one, it was wild and wary of humans, and independent! These cows had already trained their calves to fear humans and run like the wind if approached. The next thing we observed was the babysitting service. One of the small groups of cows would have momma cows trade off babysitting a group of calves while others would go to water. No coyotes dared even approach this group and humans were not even welcome either.

To contrast this group of calves to our dairy calves in hutches shows the effect of domestication and indoctrination. The hutch calves learn that people bring food and water, so humans must be a positive experience. We teach them to like us. It reminds me of the indoctrination of school children in mind-controlling oppressive regimes like the Taliban or Nazi Germany.

In general, our Holsteins respect fences, only escaping when someone leaves a gate open. Beef cows generally stay in the fence unless the grass is greener on the other side. To a beef calf, a fence is only a slight inconvenience. If you see a calf outside the fence and the cow is not concerned, don't worry about it. Come back later and the young explorer will already be back with mom.

After feeding Holsteins my whole life, my greatest respect for a beef cow comes from their willingness to go to work walking miles every day collecting their daily ration as they strengthen their independence. While on the Livestock Board, I remember hearing about a group of cows in Northern New Mexico that had lived by themselves for 6-7 years after escaping from their original ranch.

Our final bovine social experiment resulted from having 4 yearling Brangus heifers in a pasture where we had no heavy duty cattle handling facilities. After having previously tangled with a 3-year-old Brangus bull (aka fire breathing demon), I had no interest in becoming a punching bag for these massively- muscled critters. Linda came up with the plan that follows: We began to feed them just a small amount of grain every day in the water yard. They were very wary and really didn't want to come up, especially if we tried to chase them. After several days, they realized that there was a "free lunch" daily and began to expect and wait for it. Then we parked the stock trailer in the water yard and proceeded to feed them in the open rear of the trailer. Over a period of days, the grain was deposited further and further into the trailer and the animals piled into the trailer to partake of this daily snack. On the last day we fed them, they hopped into the trailer, we closed the gate as they were eating, then we hauled them away.

Beware of current and promised government programs promising various free cars, houses and free "lunches." Our freedom and independence are at stake. As any animal or person becomes more and more dependent on government handouts, the necessity for independence fades away, much as it did for our beef cows.

As we approach the holidays, let us be thankful for friends and family, health and happiness; but let us never forget that our freedom is not really free. We need to continue working for it.

Have a Happy Thanksgiving.